

ing onto the highway and taking the first immediate left, he drove on the shoulder alongside oncoming traffic the hundred feet or so to

SunLand golf

I recently had a conversation with one of my Sun-

Sequim

surroundings by stepping up and paying part of the cost such maintenance.

Only a relatively few people in SunLand play tennis,

nis courts a few years ago. The same is true for the swimming pool in which the homeowners paid \$20,000 to replace the heating system

homeowners use the pool. Helping maintain the land that is the golf course is just one other expense of retaining the ambiance of

to completely subsidize. Hopefully, the homeowners will realize this.

Roland Miller,
Sequim

School math standards don't add up

By KEVIN VAN DE WEGE

SKILLED-LABOR JOBS

have long been the backbone of the North Olympic Peninsula.

They put food on the table and pay the mortgage for many of our local families.

And the abundance of natural resources here means there will continue to be skilled-labor jobs well into the future.

However, our current state math standards do not align with the math skills needed for these jobs.

Instead, corporate business leaders and politicians, most of whom have never taught in a classroom, have set the lofty goal of having every student successfully complete math through Algebra II and pass high-stakes math tests in order to graduate.

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning, or WASL, dates all the way back to 1993.



Van De Wege

POINT OF VIEW

Although it was originally intended to simply compare schools, it has evolved into a test that determines a student's success or failure.

It is time-consuming, stressful and expensive for the state to administer.

It is also subjective, as students' answers are hand-scored, including the extended response math portion of the test.

Educators have told me that a student can get most math questions correct and still score lower than a student who gets most questions wrong — if the latter showed how they got the answer wrong and the former simply answered the question.

Does this make sense to you?

In 2007, the state tried to fix this dilemma.

We threw out the WASL for future classes and replaced it with end-of-course exams with less subjective and time-consuming questions.

However, to make this transition, we needed time and money, neither of which we have.

None of this matters to about 45 percent of Washington's stu-

dents who would pass any math requirements we mandate, whether it's the WASL, end-of-course exams, or the SAT.

But for the other 55 percent, math is becoming a barrier to on-time graduation.

Their diplomas and future success are tied to exams that have not yet been written and will not have time to be field-tested.

Plus, they are forced to take math classes that often have no connection to their post-secondary plans.

Recently, Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn proposed that we would be better off with two math tracks in our high schools: a basic and a proficient track.

The basic math track would still provide students with four credits of high school math, but the sequence would focus on practical math needed for direct entry to the work force or vocational training.

Basic math graduates would be ready to enter community college or apprenticeships, and have the kind of skills needed to be successful.

Meanwhile, students on the proficient math track would fol-

low a sequence through Algebra II, and have a strong preparation for study at a four-year college or university.

To me, this makes sense.

Both tracks would supply more rigorous math and make high school diplomas worth more.

They provide for a broader array of math options in our high schools and ensure that our kids can compete after graduation for all kinds of careers.

However, initial reaction to Dorn's proposal in Olympia and within the business community has not been positive.

Gov. Chris Gregoire said she "strongly disagreed" with it.

A *Seattle Times* editorial called the proposal "unacceptable" and blamed problems on the need for more experienced math teachers (but did not propose how to recruit more experienced math teachers).

The (Tacoma) *News Tribune* calls it "all wrong."

I call it common sense.

The math bar we have set in our high schools is not necessarily the right bar for everyone.

Let's keep the bar high, but give students new ways to reach for it.

As a professional firefighter, I

have never once used Algebra II in my career, but I use vocational math skills, such as figuring out weights and measurements, nearly every day.

It makes sense that we give students a way to hone those skills earlier rather than later.

The truth is, kids need math to succeed — no matter which path they choose in life.

But the kind of math they need is not the same for every student.

Let's give them some options so that whether they travel to the far corners of the globe or stay right here on the North Olympic Peninsula after high school, they are highly prepared for any challenge they may face.

Kevin Van De Wege is a 24th District state representative who lives in Sequim.

His district includes Clallam and Jefferson counties, and parts of Grays Harbor County.

He can be reached at vandewege.kevin@leg.wa.gov or at 360-582-9830 (Sequim office) or 360-786-7916 (Olympia office).

See "Have Your Say" below on how to send us a Point of View.

PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

JOHN C. BREWER EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
360-417-3500 ■ john.brewer@peninsuladailynews.com

REX WILSON
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
360-417-3530
rex.wilson@peninsuladailynews.com

SUZANNE WILLIAMS
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
360-417-3540
suzanne.williams@peninsuladailynews.com

NEWS DEPARTMENT

Main office:

305 W. First St., P.O. Box 1330, Port Angeles, WA 98362

■ **LEAH LEACH**, managing editor/news, 360-417-3531

■ **ROY TANAKA**, news editor, 360-417-3539

■ **BRAD LABRIE**, sports editor, 360-417-3525

■ **MARCIE MILLER**, features editor, 360-417-3550

■ General information: 360-417-3527 or

800-826-7744, Ext. 527. News fax: 360-417-3521

HAVE YOUR SAY

■ **REX WILSON**, weekday commentary editor, 360-417-3530

We encourage (1) letters to the editor of 250 words or fewer from readers on subjects of local interest, and (2) "Point of View" and "Teen Point of View" guest opinion columns of no more than 550 words that focus on local community lifestyle issues. *Please* — send us only one letter or column per month.

Letters and guest columns published become the property of *Peninsula Daily News*, and it reserves the right to react, condense or